

## Spoken Signs and Literal Hailing: Public Announcements in public transport

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### 1. Introduction.

Since living in the United Kingdom, I have grown to dread standing on train platforms. On cold evenings and frigid mornings in stations apparently devoid of staff I have learnt to despise the voice that says “We are sorry to announce that the 7:53 to London is cancelled. We apologise for any inconvenience this may cause”. Who is this “we”? And how sorry are they really? Finally on a train, there are further announcements. They point out safety cards, provide extensive details about which tickets are valid on the train, and assure passengers that sustenance is available. In a now defunct weekly column which invented words we didn’t know we needed the phenomenon was named by constructing a portmanteau from “tannoy” (a public address system) and “annoyance”.

#### Tannoyance

Endless, semi-coherent burbling about beverages, station stops and remembering to take your legs with you - delivered through speakers that make everything sound like a bee in a jar - on trains. Scientists predict that by 2014 these announcements will take longer than the average railway journey (Wyse, 2008)

In the context of trains it has also been called “railspeak” (Marsh, 2011) and described as “the language [commuters] are forced to listen to as they suffer” through their journey, a language replete with “a unique syntax and vocabulary”. Some of the content of these announcements is informational, but as the name suggests, it can also be annoying. The effective absence of the former and the presence of the latter is the target of comment; recently, by the British rail minister, Norman Baker, who argued that “These announcements are becoming more and more verbose and add nothing to the journey at all” (quoted in Millward, 2013). While this all suggests that tannoyance only occurs on trains, it is far more prevalent than this and can be heard on buses and in bus and train stations. Public announcements of a similar kind are even more widespread and may be found in airports,

shopping centres and other public places. While the effect of announcements in these spaces is likely to be similar, in this paper, I pay attention to tannoyance.

Tannoyance may well be annoying, but it also provides important information to passengers, especially in relation to non-routine events such as delays, line closures and station work. For those not familiar with a particular journey, announcements can be useful. Moreover, the routine announcements can be filtered out by those commuters who are already familiar with the order of stations. Because of their experience, these individuals have developed “attention structures” which mean they do not pay attention to at least some instances of tannoyance (Jones, 2010, p. 153). For these commuters, tannoyance is simply part of the normal public transport soundscape and constructs a space of predictable normality to which travellers can orient. Moreover, it is not the case that tannoyance adds nothing to the journey. Below I will consider how, in addition to the construction of routine for travellers and the communication of new information, tannoyance also structures the public transport space in a particular way.

As widespread as these announcements are, they have received only some attention from linguists with work on public announcements in a travel context exploring language choice (Heinrich, 2010) and developing codes (Canakis, 2000).<sup>i</sup> There is, however, increasing attention to space in sociolinguistics. Calling for an examination of space and its “role in shaping and being shaped by language,” Britain (2004) observes that space has generally “been treated as a blank canvas onto which sociolinguistics processes are painted” (p. 34). While space has always been an important concern in sociolinguistics, especially in work on variation, attention is now being given to how language and space interact and how language structures space.<sup>ii</sup>

It is possible to consider space in a number of ways, but here I pay attention to one aspect of “the ambient, unseen, ‘sonic ecology’” (Hayward, 2012, p. 457) by examining tannoyance as ‘spoken signs’ that structure space. They are understood as spoken signs for two reasons. First, the concept of the “spoken sign” captures the transience of speech, which the announcements are necessarily subject to, as well as the durability that “sign” suggests. The latter captures the nature of this talk which may be pre-recorded or performed live according to a script. Second, understanding these aural experiences as signs allows an application of existing work in the fields of linguistic landscape and geosemiotics. This is especially valuable in the current context as it allows us to see that tannoyance structures both the space in which it is broadcast as well as the audience it addresses. Just as visual signs can mark out boundaries and construct the space on either side (Mautner, 2012) spoken signs tell people what kind of space they are in and what kind of person they can be in that space.

Controlling transport spaces and the people in them is important. As these are public spaces, they are fraught with risk in that they necessarily involve proximity to other, unknown, people.

Individuals in modern society must jointly use fixed service equipment in public places and the fixed passageways to and from these places....It is inevitable, then, that citizens must expose themselves both to physical settings over which they have very little control and to the very close presence of others whose selection they have little to say (Goffman, 1971, p. 329).

Goffman's (1971) concept of civil inattention is one way of dealing with this co-presence. It requires the avoidance of "mutual interference" as a kind of background norm (Goffman, 1971, p. 331). While it is a way of managing risk, it is also predicated on trusting that everyone knows the "rules" relating to non-interference and that these will not be broken without some acknowledgment of the breach. Thus, civil inattention is also linked with civility, in that if strangers do become involved in "entangling contact, brief remedial interchanges are extended" (Goffman, 1971, p. 331). Civility is therefore understood as awareness of and adherence to relevant interactional norms. The tannoyance examined in this paper indexes the importance of both civil inattention and civility and shows how carefully they are balanced in public transport spaces.

I begin in section 2 with a short account of work in the fields of linguistic landscapes and geosemiotics before describing the data used in this paper in section 3. I show in section 4 that tannoyance locates passengers physically, relocates and sometimes gives them no place to go. I also argue that announcements which locate passengers physically can be understood as a kind of literal hailing. In section 5 I consider the way tannoyance locates people affectively, in a context of civility. Here, I argue that tannoyance can be understood as designing its audience. Section 6 details the way in which tannoyance locates people in risky spaces, tells them they are being watched and asks them to be vigilant. These announcements normalise risk and, at the same time, describe the normal behaviour expected of travellers. Finally, I argue that tannoyance interpellates the audience into an ideological order. Tannoyance constructs people as polite, civil and vigilant.

## **2. Linguistic Landscapes and Geosemiotics**

Work in semiotic landscapes also shows that language is not the only semiotic mode worthy of attention (Jaworski and Thurlow, 2010). Relevant data include physical signs, the languages in which they are written as well as information about the production, consumption and placement of signs. As such, work in this field pays attention to multilingualism, language ideology, language policy, official and non-official signage and thus to both 'bottom up' and 'top down' discourses. Likewise, the field of linguistic landscapes (LL) makes clear that the semiotic artefacts in our environment construct spaces in various ways (Shohamy and Gorter, 2009). LL refers to "linguistic objects that mark the public space" (Ben-Rafael et al, 2006, p. 7). Research in LL examines a broad range of signage and discourse, attending to the "symbolic functions of language [that] help to shape geographical spaces into social spaces" (Leeman and Modan, 2009, p. 336). Attention is also paid to the communicative force and function of signage, emphasising the subjectivity of space (Leeman and Modan, 2009). The central concern underlying all this work is, as Pennycook (2010) argues, that space is rather more dynamic than we might have thought,

and is itself communicative (p. 144). Not only are spaces meaningful in themselves, their meaning is constructed by the way humans interact with the space and with each other in that space (Jones, 2010, p. 153). This perspective is shared by work in geosemiotics:

**Geosemiotics:** the study of the social meaning of the material placement of signs in the world. By ‘signs’ we mean to include any semiotic system including language and discourse (Scollon and Wong Scollon, 2003, p. 110)

Signs interact both with the space in which they are placed and with the individuals who encounter them. “All of the signs and symbols take a major part of their meaning from how and where they are placed – at that street corner, at that time in the history of the world. Each of them indexes a larger discourse whether of public transport regulation or underground drug trafficking” (Scollon and Wong Scollon, 2003, p. 2). Understanding the meaning of signs as connected to their placement in the world is particularly important in relation to spoken signs, because as they depend on being heard, they are both physically and temporally bounded in terms of the audience they can reach.

While geosemiotics allows for consideration of a number of modes (Scollon and Wong Scollon, 2003, p. 16), here I focus largely on auditory spaces. Just as “*the sign only has meaning because of where it is placed in the world*” (Scollon and Wong Scollon, 2003, p. 29 emphasis in original; see also Denis and Pontille, 2010), it seems reasonable to suggest that a sign only has meaning because of *when* it is placed in the world. “In short, words have the power to turn a space into a place; place also has the power to fix the meaning of other words and other signs” (Lou, 2007, p. 174). Spoken signs, like physical signs, structure space into “zones where it is permissible to enact some social rules...but not others” (Mautner, 2012, p. 190). The tannoyance examined in this paper describes what is normal for public transport spaces and how tannoyance constructs the audience in these spaces. Tannoyance locates people in time and space, in relation to the speaker and the surrounding environment.

### 3, Data and Context

The definition of tannoyance given above is rather too narrow to include all the examples of spoken signs that need to be considered in the context of public transport in the United Kingdom. I suggest that there are at least four types of tannoyance:

1. A real person speaking in real time over a PA system.
2. A real person recorded reading one single text, complete in itself.<sup>iii</sup>
3. A real person recorded speaking chunks which are then spliced together to construct the necessary message. Short messages may be recorded in one chunk.
4. A synthesised voice ‘reading’ a script.

The examples considered in this paper are a convenience sample, gathered over a 9 month period (2011-12) in the United Kingdom, although mostly in and around London (underground, overground and bus).<sup>iv</sup> Some data were available online, in the form of lists of

the chunks and completed messages of type (3) tannoyance.<sup>v</sup> As such, it is far from an exhaustive sample and no data was gathered in relation to the frequency of the messages. Recording sites included train stations and underground, overground and mainline trains run by a number of companies.

In this paper I focus on the way tannoyance constructs the travelling public by locating them in a variety of ways. I deal first with the way it physically locates passengers before considering how it locates people affectively. Finally, I consider the way it constructs public transport spaces as risky.

## 5. Physical Locating

6.

The most straightforward kind of tannoyance is that which locates the hearer in space. On public transport, information about where one is and in which direction one is heading can be very important. On buses in London, the traveller is located in that she is told of her location in two ways.<sup>vi</sup> On the bus service which I most frequently use, the following is heard every time the bus starts moving again after a stop.

### Example 1 Bus to Roehampton

72 (.) to (.) Roehampton Bessborough Road

72 is the number of this bus line, and the rest the final destination. Passengers are thus located firstly on a particular bus that is travelling to a specified destination. They are also located through announcements of upcoming stops. These are generally given in time for passengers to press the 'stop' button. For example:

### Example 2 Bus to Roehampton

Fairacres

These spoken signs simply punctuate the trajectory of the bus even though the bus remains the number 72 to Roehampton. They are constructed from pre-recorded segments.

### Example 3 Structure of standard London bus announcement

[route number] 'to' [final destination].

The pattern described in example 3 is a constant, normal, soundtrack on bus journeys in London.<sup>vii</sup> Even without knowing that this is the case,<sup>viii</sup> the pauses and the prosody of the announcement makes clear that they are assembled from smaller pieces. There is a similar economy in the other spoken signs on buses in London; for example, 'Please move down inside the bus'. However, on other forms of public transport, the frames into which referential chunks are placed are rather more elaborate.

On the London underground system, pre-recorded chunks are also used. Announcements here locate the traveller in a more complex way, as, while information about the line, destination and location of the train is given, further orienting information is also provided. This routinely includes information about other branches of the underground and notice that the upcoming station is the appropriate one for a particular venue (e.g. a university,

hospital, museum or tourist attraction). For example, a journey without incident on the Victoria line passed as follows:

Example 4 Victoria Line

[0.32] The next station is (.) Euston (.) doors will open on the right hand side (.) Change for Northern line (.) London Overground (.) and National Rail services

[1.03] This is Euston (.) Change here for the Northern line (.) London Overground (.) and National Rail services (.) This is a Victoria line train to Brixton

[2.02] The next station (.) is Warren Street (.) Doors will open on the left hand side (.) Change for the Northern line

[2.28] This (.) is Warren Street (.) Change here for the Northern line (.) This is a Victoria line train to Brixton

[3.51] The next station (.) is Oxford Circus (.) doors will open on the right hand side (.) Change for Bakerloo and Central lines

[4.18] This (.) is Oxford Circus (.) change here for Bakerloo and Central Lines (.) This is a Victoria line train to Brixton

The way in which passengers are located in Example 4 is more detailed than Examples 1 and 2. The next station is announced before arrival (as in Example 2) but also on arrival. While the bus trajectory is a simple vector, with stops along it, the announcements on tubes locate passengers in relation to the relevant sectors of the tube map ("Change here for the Northern Line") as well as London landmarks ("alight here for Buckingham Palace" at Green Park underground).<sup>ix</sup> Information about interconnecting lines places the traveller in a more complex map.

The physical locating performed by tannoyance constructs and announces the normal state of the transport system. Misztal (2001) observes that as "the modern world becomes increasingly unpredictable, formless, and complex, [there is a] growing desire for normality and trust" (p. 312). Tannoyance announces what is normal. The normality of these routine announcements means that it is "safe and sound to continue on with the activity at hand with only peripheral attention given to checking up on the stability of the environment" (Goffman, 1971, p. 293). This also explains why there are more announcements on tube journeys. As many tube lines run underground the only way in which travellers can establish their location is to hear spoken signs or see physical signs. Announcements about the immediate environment, which locate passengers physically, make the immediate world of the traveller "predictable, reliable and legible" allowing them to feel free from risk and able to trust the continuing normality of their environment (Misztal, 2001, p. 313). And while it appears to be largely inconsequential, as I discuss in later sections, the construction of normality is absolutely ideological (Misztal, 2001, p. 312).

#### 4.1 Physical re-locating

Peripheral attention will be engaged when normal announcements of physical location are replaced with something else. Perhaps the most important tannoyance is that which

announces a break with normality and requires passengers to physically re-locate themselves. These announcements look like information, but they are actually instructions.

Example 5 Nottingham Station

This is a platform alteration (1) the **eigh-teen fif-teen** East Midlands Trains service to (.) Lincoln Central (.) will now depart from platform **3 b**

While this announcement consists of two declaratives, because of its content it functions as an instruction telling passengers to move to another platform. As it is an instruction, it relies on the conative function of language (Jakobson, 1960, p. 355). Further, because passengers have to do something, it is important that their attention be secured. In Example 5, this is achieved through the first declarative. In some cases, however, information is directed to an audience defined by their spatial location.

Example 6 Nottingham station

May I have your attention please on platform 4 a

However it is done, the appropriate audience has to be located before being asked to re-locate themselves. Such local attention may also be secured by broadcasting a message for platform 4a only through the loudspeakers on that platform. Both strategies depend on people being present at, or at least identifying with, a particular train or platform. Thus, these announcements construct the audience as associated with a train and/or platform and position them quite specifically.

There are two further points to make about these announcements, both of which make a comparison with visual signs. First, Examples 5 and 6 show how spoken signs secure the attention of the audience. While visual signs can use colour and size to draw the gaze, spoken signs need to translate this into an auditory mode. Attention is gained through the initial chunks of the tannoyance; 'May I have your attention', 'This is a platform alteration'. These foregrounded messages do for spoken signs what bright colours, large font size and flashing lights do for visual signs in that they secure the attention of the audience. These features in visual signs can be understood as performing paralinguistic restitution (see Thurlow, 2003 for a discussion of paralinguistic restitution in text messages). As tannoyance is a spoken sign, however, it seems reasonable to understand their attention securing features as visual restitution as they seek the attention of the audience before the key message is communicated. This does not mean that tone of voice plays no part in the core message (see Banks 1994), but the fronted portion does appear to be about securing attention. In short, spoken signs need to use auditory material to communicate what would normally be captured in other ways on a physical sign.

The second point involves comparing visual with auditory space. The possibility of broadcasting a message to only one platform reminds us that spoken signs are tricky – to have notice of them, one has to be in a particular acoustic space. Visual signs also demand some kind of proximity, but there are two differences. First, visual signs can be repeated without significant loss of intelligibility whereas spoken signs need to have some distance

from each other. That is, while visual signs can be present in the same general space (on the same wall, for example), spoken signs should not be present at the same time. Second, acoustic space is not quite so easily bounded as visual space. As a result of the lack of clear acoustic boundaries it is possible for the acoustic spaces of tannoyance to overlap.

The default voice in Example 7 is a pre-recorded male speaker. The numbers at the start of each line indicate when in the recording the announcement took place.

Example 7 Barnes to Waterloo, South West Trains

[1.36] The next station is Wandsworth Town (.) Please mind the gap between the train and the platform edge

[2.33] [*on platform tannoy Female*] The train now approaching platform 4 is the 10 32 South West Trains service to London Waterloo (.) calling at Clapham Junction [*inaudible due to passing train*]

[2.47] This is Wandsworth Town

[2.51] [*on platform tannoy Female*] Mind the gap

[2.56] [*bell*] This train is for London Waterloo

[3.00] [*on platform tannoy Male*] Please do not leave cases or parcels (.) unattended (.) anywhere on the station (.) any unattended articles (.) are likely to be **removed** (.) without warning

[3.13] [*on platform tannoy Female*] Platform 4 for the 10 32 South West Trains service to (.) London Waterloo (.) calling at Clapham Junction (.) Queenstown Road Battersea [*inaudible as train moves away*]

[4.09] The next station is Clapham Junction (.) change here for London Victoria East Croydon London Gatwick airport Brighton Kensington Olympia and Willesden Junction (.) Please mind the gap between the train and the platform edge

[5.21] This is Clapham Junction

[5.31] This train is for London Waterloo [*door close noise*]

[6.45] Safety information is displayed in **all** coaches (.) Do try to keep all personal items with you (.) if you see anything suspicious please tell a member of staff

[7.22] The next station is (.) Queenstown Road (.) Please mind the step down from the train to the platform

[8.40] This is Queenstown Road [*whistle and door close noise*]

[8.50] This train is for London Waterloo

[9.47] [*train guard*] This is a passenger announcement concerning (1) the next station Vauxhall? (.) due to station improvement work (.) being carried out there [xxx] there is a one way system (.) in place for underground passengers (.) at Vauxhall? (.) during peak evening and morning rush times (.) it may be easier to change to and from (.) the underground at London Waterloo (.) if you are leaving at Vauxhall this morning? (.) and connecting to the underground? (.) latest information I have is of a good service (.) on the Victoria line.

[10.54] The next station is (.) Vauxhall (.) change here for Brixton and London King's Cross via Victoria line London underground (.) Please mind the gap between the train and the platform edge



There are four voices here; the (default) pre-recorded train information voice on the train delivering messages assembled from smaller chunks (e.g. at 1.36); a male and a female voice (both pre-recorded) at Wandsworth Town station and finally the train guard providing information about works at Vauxhall. The train is one acoustic space. But it is placed within other acoustic spaces when it stops at stations. The station voices are not addressed to the passengers on the train, but as the passengers can hear the announcements they are, at least, unratified addressees (Goffman, 1981, p. 132). The train journey, then, is a journey through both physical and acoustic space.

#### 4.2 No place to go

Finally, some tannoyance locates passengers in an impossible place. While they depend on people being in a particular place for the message to be heard, they give the audience no place to go:

##### Example 8 Nottingham train station

...Platform 4 a (.) We are sorry to announce that the seventeen (.) fifty five (.) East Midlands trains service to (.) **Worksop** has been cancelled (.) On behalf of East Midlands Trains we apologise for the inconvenience this may cause you (.) May I have your attention please on platform 4 a (.) We are sorry to announce that the seventeen (.) fifty five (.) East Midlands Trains service to (.) **Worksop** has been cancelled (.) On behalf of East Midlands Trains we apologise for the inconvenience this may cause you (.) May I have your attention please on platform 4 a (.) We are sorry to announce that the seventeen (.) fifty five (.) East Midlands Trains service to (.) **Worksop** has been cancelled (.) This is due to signalling problems (.) On behalf of East Midlands Trains we apologise for the inconvenience this may cause you

Example 8 has a clear discourse structure, beginning with a declarative to secure attention before providing information in an apology frame and closing with an apology. However, the repetition in Example 8 is both welcome and annoying. As information about cancellations and delays is important, it is useful to have the opportunity of hearing it more than once. It is nevertheless potentially annoying for two reasons. The repetition of the cancellation so many times may itself be an irritant. Second, the lack of any further information is also problematic. Once a traveller has understood that her train has been cancelled, she then needs to know what to do next. In this instance the passenger is not provided with information about the next train to Worksop, who could be consulted about the next train or anything that would help in arriving at Worksop. This is a good example of when the absence of further tannoyance, rather than its presence, is annoying. It also places travellers in a risky space, in so far as they are now unable to make detailed predictions about their immediate future.

As discussed above, tannoyance that seeks to locate passengers in a particular space must first secure their attention. The address is already an act that locates passengers as the relevant audience. To position, and re-position the audience, these announcements must first hail them. Here I refer not only to the metaphorical hailing that Althusser (1971)

develops to explain his concept of ideology, but also to the hailing in the real life example he uses to explain his metaphor. He suggests:

that ideology “acts” or “functions” in such a way that it “recruits” subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or “transforms” the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called interpellation or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: “Hey, you there” (Althusser, 1971, p. 174).

We are constantly hailed in transport spaces and, as Althusser (1971) makes clear, we are always and already interpellated in the ideological order. The physical locating of passengers is an integral part of this interpellation. It not only tells travellers where they are, it instructs them about what is normal and what is not. The announcements which re-position the audience (or give them no place to go) need to break with the normal pattern of announcing in order to secure the peripheral attention of the traveller. Experienced passengers, accustomed to routine announcements, know when they need to attend to messages and when these messages can be ignored. The hailing of tannoyance is so literal and mundane that its ideological effects, the way it constructs passengers, is easy to overlook especially when considering the way in which passengers are physically located. In terms of ideological position, however, announcements that locate travellers affectively are far more revealing.

## 5. Affective Locating

In Example 8 above, we see an instance of the next kind of locating to be discussed. Rather than simply positioning the hearer in a physical sense, the apology in Example 8 positions the audience in an affective sense (see Holmes, 1990, p. 158). At the very least, the apology positions the hearer as someone to whom an apology (and a reason) is due. More generally, the apology indexes a particular kind of civility in the speaker and thus interpellates the audience into a civil mode.

Example 9 is a straightforward example of this civil mode.

### Example 9 London Overground

Welcome aboard the London Overground service to Gospel Oak

Example 9 functions as both information and a welcome. It performs the same functions as examples 1, 2 and 5 above which physically locate the hearer on a particular transport route. But because this information is framed as a welcome, it can be understood as having an emotive function. Above in Example 5, the conative function of tannoyance was considered. Example 10, however, shows that a range of functions, including the referential, phatic, emotive and conative, may be present in the same announcement.

### Example 10 – pre departure announcement, East Coast train to London.

[*all very fast*] Welcome aboard all passengers joining this [xxx] East Coast service to London Kings Cross we're calling at London only we're scheduled to arrive at 18: 45 (2)

My name is Jeffrey I'm your train guard (2.5) safety information has been displayed in the area between all carriages (1)

Please (.) stow your luggage in the racks available keeping all the aisles and doorways free from luggage wi fi is available on the train If you are travelling in the quiet coach of coach B (.) or coach K please switch your el- electronic items to silent and use mobile phones away from these coaches (2)

Apologies to passengers [xx] we have no seat reservations on board also we do not have any catering facilities apologies for any inconvenience caused (1)

There's some bottled water on the buffet bar (.) buffet bar counter (.) please feel free to help yourself to some complimentary water thank you?

The length of this example is not uncommon. Such announcements are routinely made on long distance trains both at the point of origin and after departing station stops. Indeed, after the train guard speaks, a member of staff from the buffet car will then remind passengers of the refreshments available. While these announcements contain a great deal of information, they also locate the audience in an affective way. Because of what is said, and how it is said, passengers are asked to be particular kinds of people. Instructions to stow luggage and to abide by the conventions of the “quiet coach” asks travellers to be civil even though its primary purpose may be to control passenger behaviour.<sup>x</sup> Further, because public transport involves the presence of other people, passengers have to balance their civility with civil inattention. It is important to note that civility is already a component of civil inattention (Bauman 1993, p. 156). But while civil inattention requires that one “attend, while demonstrating disattention” (Bauman, 1993, p. 155), civility requires at least some level of engagement with other people.

Goffman (1963 cited in Scollon and Wong Scollon, 2003, p. 59-60) links ‘civil inattention’ to public spaces and interacting with the people in them.

One gives to another enough visual notice to demonstrate that one appreciates that the other is present...while at the next moment withdrawing one's attention from him so as to express that he does not constitute a target of special curiosity or design (Goffman, 1963, p. 84, cited in Scollon and Wong Scollon, 2003, p. 59-60)

Civil inattention could be discussed in terms of negative face. The latter involves providing others with a certain amount of “territory and self-determination” so that individual action and autonomy are not limited (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 70). The train guard's requests, in Example 10, to keep luggage in particular places and to switch off mobile phones can be understood as reminding travellers of the limits of their own behaviour, such that travellers and staff are not thwarted in their basic activities. While they index civility, they are also at least allusions to civil inattention. By its very nature, the set of practices that constitute civil inattention cannot be too explicitly announced in the spaces in which it is supposed to hold. Indeed, better evidence for civil inattention is garnered from the way people behave in these spaces, what they pretend not to notice. In London, civil inattention reaches its apotheosis where travellers, especially on tubes, will not even speak to fellow commuters (Fox, 2004, p. 143).

Civility is clearly marked in these announcements, at least in terms of the train guard's performance. Opening with a welcome, which locates the passengers on a particular train with a particular destination, he punctuates his informative address (in quickly delivered script) with conventional politeness markers and associated speech acts ("Please", "thank you", "apologies") (Brown and Levinson, 1987). These are all "expressions of civility" (Goffman, 1971, p. 331) which serve as remedies to potentially face-threatening acts. The choices the train guard makes can be described in terms of audience design (Bell, 1984) but they also design the audience. In the following, I first examine how tannoyance is an instance of audience design before paying attention to the way it designs the audience.

## 6. Audience design

Speaking over a public address system to a group of people is not unlike the role of radio presenters. When addressing an audience which is not physically face to face with the speaker, choices about how to address them need to be made. In Bell's (1984) classic study, radio announcers used a variety of English which aligned with the sociolinguistic profile of the imagined audience. Bell's (1984) speaker – a real person – adjusts his talk to suit an imagined listening public according to a continuum of prestige standard/vernacular. His speech is designed for a particular audience as "Speakers assess the personal characteristics of their addressees, and design their style to suit" (Bell, 1984, p. 167; see also Banks, 1994). In Example 10 this is no doubt also true. As an employee of the East Coast train company, the train guard needs to maintain the auditory atmosphere of the company just as a radio station seeks to keep its target audience by speaking in an appropriate way. The announcements, not being uniform across franchise holders,<sup>xi</sup> can be also understood as branding the company in some way. In that sense, they construct a particular kind of corporate semiotic landscape as well as a particular kind of audience (Thurlow and Jaworski, 2012). An important part of this corporate atmosphere, for intercity trains in the UK, appears to be calling on employees to make announcements, providing their own name, and apparently personal offers of assistance. Whether conventional or intentional, the performance and sequencing of these scripts are designed for the travelling audience. Just like the media, train companies are "slaves to the audience" (Bell, 1984, p. 193), the travelling public.

While they are tailored for an audience they also design the audience.<sup>xii</sup> As seen in Example 10, the announcements ask passengers to behave in particular ways, to put their luggage in a specific place and to refrain from using their mobile phones in some carriages. Tannoyance asks passengers to be particular kinds of people. This is clear when considering some of the automated announcements on the London overground system.

### Example 11 Announcements made on London Overground trains<sup>xiii</sup>

Please allow passengers to alight before attempting to board the train.  
Move right down the platform and use all available doors.  
Please move down inside the carriage to allow others to board

This train is ready to depart please stand clear of the doors

These announcements attempt to design the audience as polite, considerate users of public transport. While politeness strategies may 'defer' to an audience (Bell, 1984, p. 175) here, they also seek to position them in other ways. Tannoyance therefore has similarities with "initiative style shifts" as "The audience interprets initiative shifts in terms of what person such a style would normally be addressed to" (Bell, 1984, p. 185). In the case of tannoyance, more specific instructions are provided about the kind of person one should be. This designing, or designation, is required because clearly passengers do not always behave well. Of course, these broadcasts can be useful for novice travellers; there are conventions which should be followed when one is using London transport. But for experienced users, these announcements are essentially an admonishment of bad manners and suggest a lack of logical common sense in the travelling public. Nevertheless, these announcements are also routine and as such, construct the 'normal' public transport space.

The good manners of train companies appear also to be part of the normal public transport space in that they often apologise.

#### Example 12 Nottingham train station

...fifteen East Midlands trains service to (.) Lincoln Central is delayed by approximately 12 minutes (.) on behalf of East Midlands trains (.) we apologise for this late running and the inconvenience this may cause you

While on the face of it, Example 12 and Example 10 are apologies, I suggest that in fact they are do not quite fit the normal definition of this speech act. Holmes (1990) defines the apology as:

...a speech act addressed to B's face-needs and intended to remedy an offence for which A takes responsibility and thus to restore equilibrium between A and B (where A is the apologizer, and B is the person offended) (Holmes, 1990, p. 159).

But the apologies here do little to remedy the real offence, the late running of a train. Indeed, these apologies are perhaps best understood as "conveying bad news" (Holmes 1990, p. 163) with the apology simply acting as a polite frame for this information. Nevertheless, the framing of information in this way is an important part of the affective location of the audience. As Norrick (1978 cited in Holmes 1990, p. 164) observes, such apologies can be used "to evince good manners, to assuage the addressee's wrath, or simply to get off the hook and be on one's way" (p. 281 cited in Holmes 1990, p. 164).

Tannoyance apologies position the speaker (and the associated train company) as morally responsible and well mannered. While they convey bad news to travellers, they also index socio-cultural norms of interpersonal communication (Coulmas, 1981, p. 70). Goffman (1971) describes apologies as splitting the speaker into two parts: "the part that is guilty of an offence and the part that dissociates itself from the delict and affirms a belief in the offended rule" (p. 143; cited in Coulmas, 1981, p. 83). In the case of tannoyance, there are

two rules being affirmed. The first is that to which Goffman is referring, that delays warrant an apology. The second is the 'rule' that delivering news of delays to the travelling public ought to be done in the form of an apology. These apologies are clearly "ritual apologies" where "the speaker is simply fulfilling what is expected of him" (Fraser, 1981, p. 266). These expectations relate to the specific affective locating of tannoyance's addressees. The civil speaker, issuing apologies and conveying bad news in an appropriate way, constructs the passenger as someone to whom an apology is due and who is well mannered enough to accept the messages at face value.

## 7. Risky locating

The travelling public have so far been located in time and space and hailed as polite and civil individuals. There is one more way in which tannoyance designs the audience: it places them in a risky space. While this may be done with explicit warnings, it also occurs through the conveying of, what looks like, banal information. Around train and bus stations, one often hears the following:

### Example 13 Announcement at Kings Cross Station

24 hour CCTV recording (.) is in operation at this station (.) for the purpose of security and safety management

Example 13 does more than simply provide information about being monitored. It tells the audience that someone is watching, but it is not entirely clear who. Applying Grice (1989), it is possible to construct an implicature which is rather less comforting than the surface message. Specifically, the implicature is 'you are in a dangerous space'. The references to safety and security support this implicature; the station is not, without the watchers, safe. The watchers, however, need to make their presence known. As this is a legal requirement, the announcement in Example 13 indexes a legal order, one which permits the surveillance of the public once they have been told they are being watched. In this way, "the sign is legally performative – that is, it is an essential element without which the legal rule concerned cannot be applied in the first place" (Mautner, 2012, p. 199).

The constant tannoyance about CCTV, in addition to physical signage and the presence of cameras, suggests that such surveillance may be entirely normal for the travelling public (Lewis, 2011; McGovern, 2013). While normality is more usually "manufactured or constructed by people in the same surroundings as they come to terms with the level of danger therein" (Miształ, 2001, p. 315), in the context of public transport risk is normalised by the repeated announcements which index it. There is something of a tension here as while the risk has been normalised, people are also being monitored in order to assess who is 'normal' and who is not (Miształ, 2001, p. 319). The travelling public is also expected to participate in this monitoring. While the tannoyance in Example 13 locates passengers in a risky space, it does provide some reassurance. Other tannoyance, however, makes particular demands of the audience.

### Example 14 Announcements made at London train stations

Please do not leave cases or parcels unattended anywhere on the station  
Any unattended articles are likely to be removed without warning

Though the announcements in Example 14 are recorded and filed as two separate messages, they usually occur together. They are not the only examples of this kind of tannoyance.

Example 15 Security announcement at London train stations

This is an important security announcement. Please keep your luggage and personal belongings with you at all times. Unattended items may be removed and destroyed without warning. Please report any suspicious behaviour and unattended items to a member of staff or a police officer. Thank you for your assistance.

The announcement in Example 15 indexes historical events and contemporary knowledge of the specific risks of bombs and other explosive devices. Terrorist events in London, on and around the transport system, mean that these warnings should not be taken lightly.<sup>xiv</sup> These announcements not only place members of the public in a risky space, they also ask the audience to be civil and vigilant. Civility and risk are marked; as the absence of the former may be a good indication of the latter (Goffman, 1971, p. 241). The request to be vigilant also needs to be balanced with the conventional practice of civil inattention. As with civility, looking is already part of civil inattention. As Bauman (1993) explains, “[t]he point is to see while pretending that one is not looking” (p. 155). The request for travellers to be vigilant simply foregrounds the fact that in public spaces everyone is already watching everyone else.

There are other, more mundane, risks to be attended to. The most well known risk on the London underground has to do with the physical environment. Usually cited in its bare form, it does occur in elaborated frames and modified forms:

Example 16 Mind the Gap

Mind the gap  
Please mind the gap between the train and the platform edge  
Please mind the step down from the train to the platform

This announcement can be understood as emblematic of the balancing of civility, civil inattention and vigilance. Minding the gap is absolutely routine and normal for travellers in London. Indeed, the risk has been normalised to the extent that it is an icon of the system itself. Minding the gap is just one of the iconic risks of London transport. The climate also generates risks.

Example 17 Weather announcements at train stations

Due to the wet conditions passengers are advised to take extra care on the platforms and on the stairways.

In this hot weather it is advisable to carry a bottle of water with you. Should someone be taken ill while on the train please wait until the next station to seek help.

It is perhaps part of English culture to take the centrality of weather for granted (Fox, 2004, p. 26 ff). This is even more pronounced when it comes to public transport. People have become quite used to trains not running properly because it is too hot, too cold or because of leaves on the lines (see Fox, 2004, p. 14; Moran, 2007, p. 24; Wainwright, 2011). People are well aware of the strain the weather places on public transport. They are also well acquainted with the slippery nature of wet surfaces though perhaps less familiar with the dehydrating effects of extreme heat. More generally, however, announcements involving references to the weather should be understood as emphasising the riskiness of public transport spaces. Whether because of under-investment or dangerous weather, train stations, buses and underground systems are fraught with danger.

### **8. Conclusion: Being Hailed**

Tannoyance locates its audience in time and space, asks them to be civil and to balance civil inattention with vigilance in the risky spaces of public transport. Some of this locating is useful but all of it interpellates the travelling public in an ideological order. Indeed, the physical locating discussed in Section 4 may seem more like surveillance when considered in relation to Example 13. The ideology which positions the travelling public has many facets. It recognises and commends civility and vigilance and the careful balancing of these with civil inattention.

Tannoyance not only constructs space, but also indexes an imagined space, one where people are polite and civil. As Scollon and Wong Scollon (2003) note, “[i]t is just these invisible, almost banal, systems of meaning which form socio-political systems that so closely define us and our actions in the world” (p. 6). Tannoyance is connected with ideas of who we should be in our normal, routine, everyday lives. These behaviours are not so much connected to ideas about how we see ourselves in relation to ‘others’ but what we find acceptable in ourselves. Although mundane, and although imaginary, this is nevertheless ideological. As Althusser (1971) argues, “[w]hat is represented in ideology is therefore not the system of the real relations which govern the existence of individuals, but the imaginary relation of those individuals to the real relations in which they live” (p. 165). Indeed, the most dominant cultural ideologies are the quotidian (Althusser, 1971).

Tannoyance locates travellers in various ways. It tells them where they are, provides a map for where they are going even though sometimes it gives them no place to go. It also positions people affectively. Tannoyance reminds passengers to be civil and to practice civil inattention even while monitoring the behaviour of fellow travellers. Finally, tannoyance also reminds passengers of risks. The gaps, the weather, the slippery surfaces are all part of the normal transport space. These reminders also index human activity that has occurred in these spaces. Warnings to stay with your luggage and not to leave parcels unattended



remind passengers of the very real risk of terrorism in transport spaces.<sup>xv</sup> These events have left their acoustic mark in tannoyance just as they have on the passenger psyche.

Tannoyance may well be annoying, but it is also an important part of the transport soundscape. Indeed, as mentioned above, its absence can be more annoying than its presence. Its absence may also be cause for concern, as this would disrupt the normal soundscape (Goffman, 1971, p. 254). In its constant reminders, its repeated information and its frequent apologies, tannoyance asks passengers to be civil, to be observant, to obey the rules, to pay attention to the weather and to remember basic manners. This is a significant construction and it is ideological. Tannoyance constructs and then broadcasts a precise vision of imagined civility. In exactly the same way that written signs structure a space, these spoken signs construct a public transport space as well as constructing the people who move through it.

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<sup>i</sup> This aspect of tannoyance will not be covered in this paper as in England announcements on public transport are almost exclusively in English. However, the express train from Gatwick airport includes broadcasts in languages other than English (<http://automatedannouncements.wikia.com/wiki/Trains>).

In Wales, announcements are made in both Welsh and English.

<sup>ii</sup> Work on graffiti may also have helped the move to new spaces (Carrington 2009; Hanauer, 2011; Pennycook 2010).

<sup>iii</sup> For example, just before the 2012 Olympics in London, the following was broadcast in London stations. : "Hi folks! This is the Mayor here. This is the greatest moment in the life of London for 50 years. We're welcoming more than a million people a day to our city and there is going to be huge pressure on the transport network. "Don't get caught out. Get online and plan your journey at [GetAheadoftheGames.com](http://GetAheadoftheGames.com)." (Magnay, 2012).

<sup>iv</sup> London's tube network is the underground; other train lines in the Greater London area are collectively referred to as the 'overground'.

<sup>v</sup> Recorded data includes information about emphasis, pauses and speed; while data obtained from written sources does not.

(,) short pause

(.)pause

**Bold** emphasis

**Bold underlined** extreme emphasis

? rising intonation

(#) longer timed pause

[#.##] time point in recording

[*other*] information about speaker or speed

[xxx] inaudible

For written data files see;

<http://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/52114/response/133427/attach/3/iBus%20Recordings.pdf> [last accessed 12<sup>th</sup> March 2013]

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<http://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/50853/response/144994/attach/html/4/Driver%20Initiated%20Message%20Texts.pdf.html> [last accessed 12<sup>th</sup> March 2013]

[http://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/ibus\\_old](http://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/ibus_old) [last accessed 13<sup>th</sup> March 2013]

[http://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/london\\_overground\\_announcements](http://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/london_overground_announcements) [last accessed 12<sup>th</sup> March 2013] and [http://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/ibus\\_announcements](http://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/ibus_announcements) [last accessed 13<sup>th</sup> March 2013]

<sup>vi</sup> The generic ‘she’ is used where a generic is required in this paper.

<sup>vii</sup> The iBus system (LED screens and spoken track) is installed on all London buses.

<http://www.tfl.gov.uk/static/corporate/media/newscentre/archive/11573.html> See also Transport for London (2009).

<sup>viii</sup> For individual components, see

<http://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/52114/response/133427/attach/3/iBus%20Recordings.pdf> [last accessed 12<sup>th</sup> March 2013]. For other pre-recorded messages, not relating to destinations and stops, see

<http://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/50853/response/144994/attach/html/4/Driver%20Initiated%20Message%20Texts.pdf.html> [last accessed 12<sup>th</sup> March 2013]

<sup>ix</sup> Note that, while ‘alight’ was used during the period of data collection, this has now been changed to ‘exit’. The trains can also be set to different announcement ‘modes’, specifically, commuter mode and tourist mode. The latter includes information about landmarks of interest to visitor.

<http://districtdave.proboards.com/thread/16166/dva-changes-more-camden-market?page=1#page=1>

<sup>x</sup> Thanks to one of the reviewers for this point.

<sup>xi</sup> Trains in the UK are operated by a number of companies with a licence to run a particular line.

These franchise holders are companies whose brand may reach across different forms of public transport (e.g. First Group, which runs buses and trains) or across a number of different industries (e.g. Virgin).

<sup>xii</sup> In literary terms, this is analogous to the implied reader.

<sup>xiii</sup> See [http://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/london\\_overground\\_announcements](http://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/london_overground_announcements) [last accessed 13<sup>th</sup> March 2013]

<sup>xiv</sup> Such announcements, along with the removal of any bins in and around stations, have their roots in the IRA bombings of the 1980s and 1990s. Indeed, the extensive use of CCTV is also connected to IRA activity in London (Norris and McCahill, 2006: 101). These regimes have been in place for so long that time and events have recontextualised them; the 7/7 bombers and the general 'war on terror' now warrants these announcements and the various other rules and practices that come with them.

<sup>xv</sup> These events include the attacks of July 7<sup>th</sup> 2005 (known as 7/7) as well as IRA bombings in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. After a bomb was placed in a bin in Victoria station in 1991, killing one and injuring many others, bins were removed from train stations. They are now re-appearing in the form of plastic bags attached to a metal ring.